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A. BARTO

LITTLE VERSES *for* LITTLE FOLK

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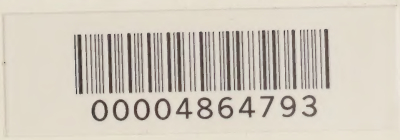
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A. BARTO

LITTLE VERSES *for* LITTLE FOLK

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CHAPEL HILL

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

ILLUSTRATED BY A. BREI AND V. GORYAEV

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TOYS

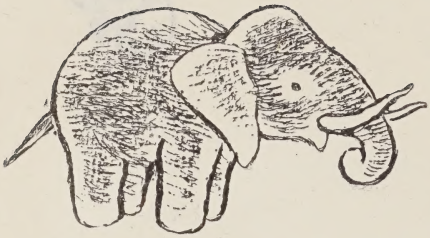
TEDDY

On the floor lies Tiny Teddy,
Half a paw is gone already.
He is tattered, torn, and lame,
Yet I love him just the same.

THE WOODEN BULL-CALF

The Bull-Calf walks with shaking knees.
The funny thing's so small!
The board is ending soon, he sees,
And he's afraid to fall.

THE ELEPHANT



Time for bed! The Calf's asleep,
In his basket, snug and deep.

Teddy's sleeping in his cot,
But the Elephant is not.

He nods his head and looks askant
At the Lady Elephant.

THE AEROPLANE

We will build a plane and soar
Over woodland, sea, and shore,
Over woodland, sea, and shore,
And fly back to Mum once more.

THE LORRY

Now we all are very sorry:
We put Pussy in the lorry;
Pussy didn't like the ride—
Lo! the lorry's on its side.

BUNNY

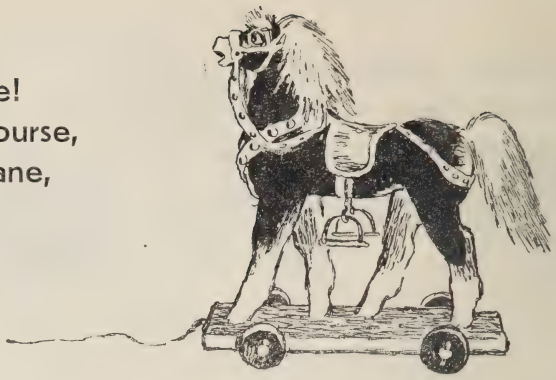
Once a little scatter-brain
Left poor Bunny in the rain.
What could little Bunny do?
He got wet just through and
through.

THE SAIL-BOAT

A cap like a sailor's,
A string in my hand,
I'm sailing my sail-boat
Away from the land.
The frogs croak in chorus,
As they leap aside,
"Ahoy, Little Skipper!
Please give us a ride!"

MY HORSE

How I love my little Horse!
I will brush him well, of course,
I will comb his tail and mane,
And go riding out again.



THE BALL

Little Tanya's sadly sobbing,
On the waves her ball is bobbing.
Do not cry your eyes out so:
Rubber balls don't drown, you
know.

MY BILLY-GOAT

With my Goat, so small and funny,
I go walking every day.
In our garden, green and sunny,
I and Billy love to play.

Should my little Billy stray,
I will find him straightaway.

THEY WENT AWAY

With milk they fed him, sweet and white—
"Just see the way he grows!"
They tiptoed up to him at night
To see that everything was right,
To feel his tiny nose.

They loved to train their little pet,
They bustled all day long;
And Puppy, just a bit upset,
Walked with them on a thong.

He growled at strangers just the same
As any grown-up dog.
But then a motor lorry came,
And he was all agog.

He waited for the boys to play,
But they got in and rode away.

He was so used to campfires gay,
To bugle calls at break of day...
And so he barked with might and main,
That they might all come back again.

He was alone—so all alone
That he began to wail.
He spent an hour lying prone,
He didn't care for meat or bone,
He didn't wag his tail.

The boys, remembering at last,
Rode back without delay.
When to the camp house they ran fast,
He met them on their way.

To meet the boys, he ran apace,
He jumped and licked each youngster's face.
And as they stroked and hugged him tight,
He barked for joy with all his might.

THE LANTERN

I'm not lonely in the night,
For I have a magic light.
When you look at it by day,
You can't see a single ray,
But at night there can be seen
Teeny-weeny rays of green.
For my light, you realize,
Is a jar of fire-flies.

MY SEA-SHELL

My pretty little sea-shell—
I keep it safe and dry.
Yet once, down at the seashore,
In sand it used to lie.

My Granddad
From the Black Sea
Has given it to me;
And if you listen closely,
You'll hear in it the sea...

You'll hear in it the breakers,
The hissing of the foam,
And you will think the Black Sea
Has come into your home.

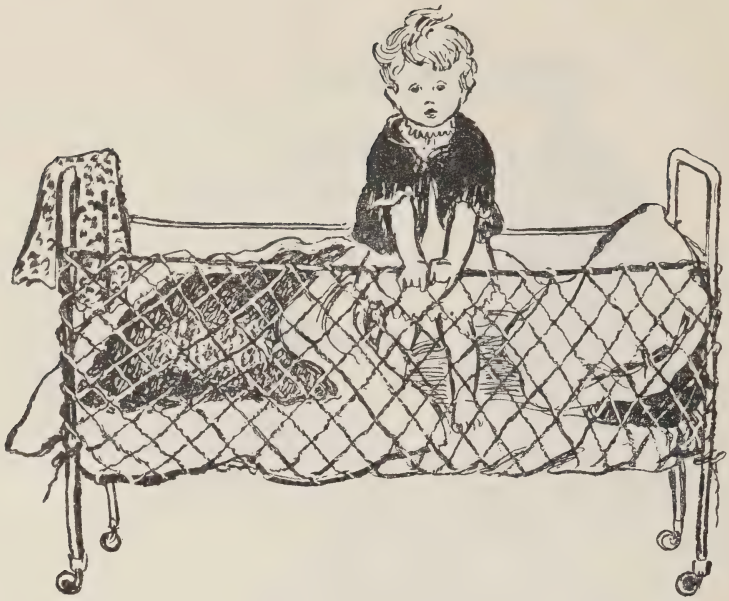
SPRING IS COMING

Sparkling April sunshine
O'er the whole world glowed;
In our yard this morning,
Wide, wide rivers flowed.

But the day grew colder,
Frost again set in,
And the streams were covered
With a glassy skin.

But I broke the shiny,
Crackling, glassy pane,
And the wide, wide rivers
Freely flowed again.

Grown-ups hailed each other,
"Spring has come, how nice!"
They didn't know that it was I,
Breaking up the ice.



MASHA

Who is sleeping here,
Please say?
Who gets up
At the break of day?
Why, it's Masha in her bed!
She has lifted up her head.
Pulling blanket off, and sheet,
She stands up upon her feet.

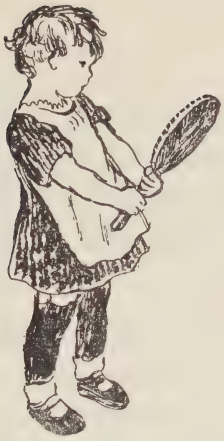
* * *

No, this isn't just a room:
It's the biggest land you've seen.
Here two giant sofas loom;
There a field—the carpet green.

* * *

Masha took the looking-glass,
And she peeped inside.
She could scarce believe her eyes.
"Who is that?" she cried.

When she reached the chair,
She stood a little there.
And to the table then
She toddled off again.



* * *

We will draw a garden—so,
Where a lot of currants grow.
On one bush are currants black,
On another, currants red.
All the black belong to Jack,
All the red belong to Ted.

* * *

All day long, the Goldfinch sings,
In a cage upon the sill.
Though he's almost three years old,
He's afraid of Pussy still.

But Masha isn't frightened
Of Goldfinch or of Cat.
She gave the bird some water
And told the Cat to scat.

* * *

All the lassies, in a ring,
Stood as still as still could be.
Father Winter lit the lights
On the great big New Year's tree.

On the top, a star,
Beads, row upon row;
Don't put out the lights:
May they always glow!

* * *

The clock has just struck eight,
The house will soon be still,
We'll cover with a cloth
The cage upon the sill.

Now, Masha has a Daughter;
She's getting on for two.
You'll never hear her crying:
She sleeps the whole night through.

Shadows glide upon the wall,
Like huge jungle beasts they prowl.
In her sleep, the mother Cat
At her Kits is heard to growl.

We go to bed quite early
And draw the curtains tight.
The giant sofas stand there,
Like mountains in the night. . .

Lulla-lulla-lulla-by,
Sleep, my Masha, do not cry.

MUMMY'S LITTLE HELPER

Little Tanya's very busy:
She is helping all the day.
When her brother's eating sweetmeats,
Tanya helps him straightaway.

Eating, drinking tea, and resting,
All are things that she must do.
First she'll sit a while near Mummy,
Then she'll sit near Granny, too.

And before she went to bed,
To her Mummy Tanya said:
"I'm too tired to undress,
But I'll help tomorrow, yes."

SPOT THE WATCH-DOG

I'm tired of this loafing
and loitering, chum;
A watch-dog is what
I should like to become.

I've seen an advertisement
out in the yard:
A watch-dog is wanted
a garden to guard.

I'm a brave little puppy,
you know me all right.
If a cat comes my way,
she is in for a bite.

I can bark rather loud,
    I can growl without end,
I can tell who's a stranger
    and who is a friend.

All the kittens in town
    are afraid of brave Spot.
Now, please tell me the truth:
    is the job mine or not?

THE CRICKET

Daddy was working,
So I sat quite still.
Just then,
A Cricket
Chirped under the sill.

I searched near the window,
And looked on the floor,
But then heard the Cricket
Chirp hard by the door.

He's near, and he's far,
But where—who can say!
At times he is silent,
At times chirps away.

Does he fly? Does he jump?
Does he crawl like a snail?
Perhaps, he has whiskers,
And also a tail?

Or maybe he's fuzzy,
And frightful to see?
And when he crawls out,
How surprised all will be!

And then Mummy said,
"He makes noise all the day.
I think we should drive
Such a lodger away."

We searched high and low,
And we searched all around:
A long-lost umbrella
Was all that we found.

And under the sofa,
Dad's glasses found we,
But never a sign
Of the Cricket did see.

Unseen little Cricket,
You come and you go,
But what you may look like,
I still do not know.

THE SKIPPING-ROPE

It's spring, it's spring-time in the air!
Spring days have come along!
The tinkling tram-bells sound like birds
Just breaking into song.

Alive with noisy merriment
Our Moscow is today.
The leaves on trees aren't dusty yet,
But sticky, fresh, and gay.

The rooks are cawing in the trees,
The lorries rumble past.
It's spring, it's spring-time in the street,
Spring days have come at last!

As you walk out into our street,
Take care, be sure to watch your feet!
"One- two- three- four- five- six- seven!"
Girls' voices ring as small feet beat.

It's the children from our yard,
It is they your way have barred—
Little champions in skipping,
Skipping, tripping fast and hard.

In the boulevards and gardens
And in every yard and street,
You can hear these merry youngsters,
You can watch their nimble feet,
Spinning, turning,
Skipping, hopping,
Rarely resting,
Seldom stopping.

Little Lida, full of hope,
Comes and takes the skipping-rope.
All the other little girls
Gaily go on skipping—
Why then cannot Lida's hands
Keep the rope from slipping?

"Lida, Lida, you're too small!"
"Lida cannot skip at all!"
"Lida's just a little baby!"
"Let her stop, or she will fall!"

In the corridor next morning
Tiny feet began to stamp,
And the noise awoke a neighbour
Who began to scold the scamp.

He was very, very angry,
More than he had ever been.
"Who is stamping there so early?
What can all this stamping mean?"

Lida's Granny got up also—
"Anyway, it's time to rise."
It was all that little Lida
Having skipping exercise.

Lida counts aloud while skipping,
And she does her best, it's true,
But in fact she has not counted
Any more than up to two.

Lida asks her grandmother
To turn the rope a while;
Just a bit more exercise
And then she'll skip a mile.

"Now, my darling," Granny says,
"I think we'd better stop,
Or else the plaster down below
Will soon begin to drop."

It's spring, it's spring-time in the street,
Spring days have come at last!

The rooks are cawing in the trees,
The lorries rumble past.

Alive with noisy merriment
Our Moscow is today.
The leaves on trees aren't dusty yet,
But sticky, fresh, and gay.

Lida takes the rope once more
As she did the day before.

"Lida, Lida, look at Lida!"
Cry the other little girls,
"Look how good she is at skipping!"
"Look how fast the rope she twirls!"

Turning, spinning,
Skipping, hopping,
Rarely resting, seldom stopping,
On the spot
And at a run—
Skipping is such jolly fun!
Skipping all along the street,
All the records Lida beats.

It's spring, the spring has come at last,
The spring is in the air!
The elder boys and girls to school
Are going everywhere.

With children's noisy gaiety
Ring garden, yard and park;
So skip, my Lida, all you like,
Be merry as a lark!

WOLF AND GEESE

Mick and May came out to play
With Mary, Ann, and Dickey.
Wolf and Geese they played that day,
And the Wolf was Mickey.

"Ga-ga, Grey Geese! To your homes!
In the wood a bad Wolf roams!"

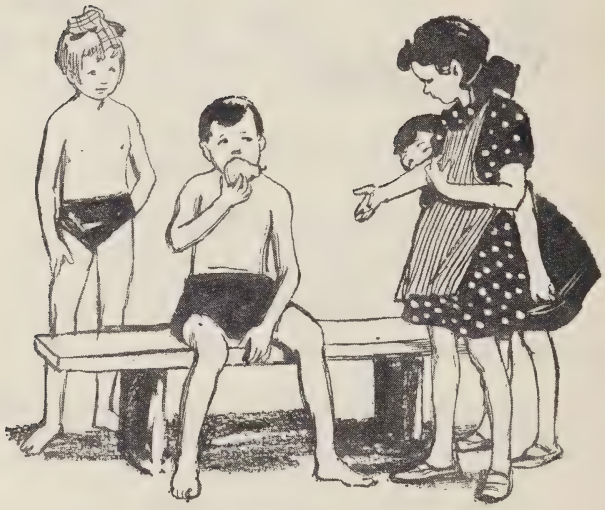
All the Geese ran after that,
On his bench the Wolf still sat.

So the Geese all gathered round
Lazy little Mickey.

"Wolf, why don't you eat us up?"
He was asked by Dickey.

"Such a Wolf is not much use!"
Said another little Goose.
"Oh, the Wolf is just afraid!"
Ann and May together said.

"No, I'm not," the Wolf declares,
"And you'll see I mean it, too!
Let me finish with these pears—
Then I'll finish off with you!"



DIRTY LITTLE BESS

"Oh you dirty
little Bess!
Why are you
in such a mess?

Palms and arms
in dirty streaks—
Not been washed
for weeks and weeks!"

"I was in
the sun today,
Holding up
my hands this way—
And so they got sunburnt!"

"Oh you dirty
little Bess!

Why's your face
in such a mess?

What a dirty nose!
you'd think
It was dipped
in coal-black ink!"

"I was in
the sun today,
Holding up
my nose this way—
And so it got sunburnt!"

"Why, you dirty
little Bess,
All your feet
are in a mess!"

"I was in
the sun today,
Holding up
my feet this way—
And so they got sunburnt!"

"Is that so?
But still, I hope,
That will go
by means of soap!
We'll scrub them off!"

When the sponge
came into sight

Bess began
to scratch and fight.

Bess began
to screech and whine,
"Oh, don't touch
those hands of mine!

Whiter they
will never be!
They are sunburnt—
can't you see?"
And yet we scrubbed them off!

Then we started
on her nose.
What a dreadful
noise arose!

"Oh, my poor dear nosie!
it cannot be rosy!
Paler it will never be;
it is sunburnt—can't you see?"
And yet we scrubbed it off, too.

"Mummy, ouch, it's tickly!
Oh, the brush is prickly!
White my feet will never be;
they are sunburnt—can't you see?"
But they were scrubbed off, after all.

Now, my Bess, you're nice and white,
and your sunburn's vanished quite.
It was simply dirt.

TEARFUL GANYA

What a noise!
What a din!
Has a herd of cows come in?
No, it's not a milk-cow's moo,
It is Ganya's "Boo-hoo-hoo!"
Crying out her little eyes,
With her frock her tears she dries.
Boo-oo-oo!

Out of doors our Ganya goes
And she puckers up her nose:

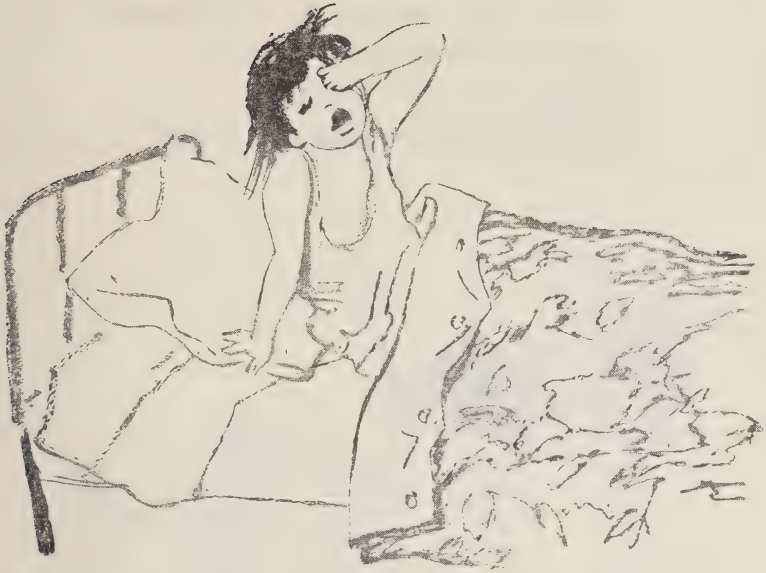
"Oh, how nasty it is there!
No, I won't go anywhere!"
Boo-oo-oo!

Ganya toddles home again,
But her tears pour down like rain.
"Let me out again," cries she,
"Staying in is bad for me!"
O-o-oh!

Ganya got some milk today;
"Take this great big cup away!
I don't want it, bring another!"
Ganya whimpers to her mother.
Waa-aa-aa!

On the table it was put,
Tearful Ganya stamped her foot:
"Take this milk away from me!
Better bring a cup of tea!"
Woo-hoo-hoo!

Tearful Ganya goes to bed
Nearly crying off her head.

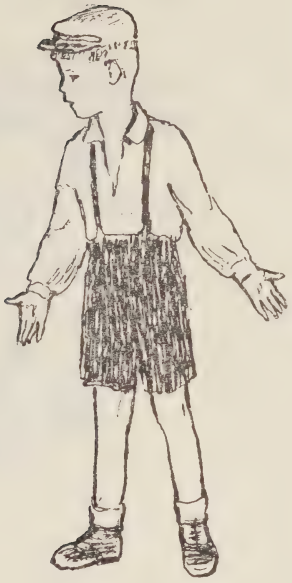


"I don't feel like sleeping!"
Ganya grumbles weeping.
Boo-oo-oo!

People came in a crowd
To see who wept so loud;
Who could it be crying,
Sobbing, moaning, sighing?

At the girl before their eyes
They were taken with surprise:
Wet with tears from foot to head,
And her swollen nose all red.
Boo-oo-oo
Hoo-oo-oo...

"What's the matter? Why such tears?
You're already seven years!
If you keep on crying so,
Moss upon your nose will grow!"



THE ENCOUNTER

As I walked down the street one day,
I met a puppy on my way.

I can't imagine why, but he
A sudden fancy took to me.

And heedless of the summer's heat,
He trotted with me down the street.

We reached my door; but he, instead
Of coming in, just walked ahead.

I called to him, "Come here, I say!"
He only growled, and ran away.

He wasn't making friends with me,
And so we parted company.

I'M A BIG GIRL NOW

Now with toys I cannot bother:
I'm learning how to read!
So I'll give them to my brother—
He shall have them—yes, indeed!

Not my wooden tea-things, though—
No, not yet, they're new, you know.
And although my Bunny's lame,
I shall keep him, just the same.

Teddy-Bear? His coat's too greasy.
He won't have my Dolly, for

He will pull her all to pieces,
Or he'll drop her on the floor.

Let him have my choo-choo, maybe?
It's too old to give away.
Then, although I am no baby,
I must also sometimes play.

Now with toys I cannot bother:
I am learning how to read.
But I shall not let my brother
Have a single one, indeed!

THE BULLFINCH

There's a bird-shop in our street
which is always full of song.
Pigeons coo, canaries warble,
finches whistle all day long.

In that bird-shop, in our street,
many lovely birds they keep;
But I saw a certain bullfinch
that has robbed me of my sleep.

Now, his little breast was scarlet,
and his wings a shiny grey;
Not for even half a minute
could I tear my eyes away.

And because of this same bullfinch,
I cried loud—when Mummy heard.
I was sure, she would take pity
and would let me have the bird.

But my Mummy doesn't answer—
it's a habit, I suppose,
When I ask about the bullfinch,
she begins about my clothes:

That I tore my shirt while fighting,
that my shoes are soaking wet,
That for these and other reasons,
I can't have a bullfinch yet.

So I dogged my Mummy's footsteps,
lay in ambush by the door,
And at dinner-time, on purpose,
spoke about the bird once more.

If she wished, I wore galoshes,
even though the streets were dry.
And I was so good, in general,
that you'd think I wasn't I.

With Papa I hardly argued,
and on doors I didn't swing.

Everybody I kept thanking
for each single, little thing.

Oh, how Mummy was astonished!
"Tell me, dear, are you all right?
This must be the second Sunday
that you haven't had a fight!"

And I sadly hung my head.
"I am being good," I said.

That I didn't try for nothing,
I am sure you must have heard.
"It's a wonder!" said my Mummy,
and she went and bought the bird.

When she brought it home to me,
I just sang and danced with glee;
And I called to all the neighbours:
"I've a real live bullfinch, see!"

I will love my little bullfinch,
He will sing from morn till night.
Now, perhaps, it will not matter,
if I have another fight?

THE ANGLER

Each morning on the lake you'll see
An angler. All day long
He sits and hums a melody,
A wordless little song.

This melody, so wonderful,
Of joy and grief does tell;
But in the lake the fishes all
Have learnt his song full well,
And when that angler's song they hear,
The fishes simply disappear.

THE CHATTERBOX

I'm no chatterbox--not I!
Little Vova spread that lie.
Chatter? I've no time, so how
Can I chatter, tell me, now!

Photo-club, and mathematics,
Singing circle and dramatics;
Then, besides, I am a member
Of the drawing-club, remember.

Yesterday, our teacher said,
As at me she wagged her head,
"Photo-club, dramatics, dear,
That's a bit too much, I fear.

Choose one circle, girl, and you
Will have quite enough to do."

So, I chose photography...
But I love to sing, you see;
And, besides, I am a member
Of the drawing-club, remember.

I'm no chatterbox—not I!
Little Vova spread that lie.
Chatter? I've no time, so how
Can I chatter, tell me, now!
Then I've extra tasks to do:
German—one, and Russian—two.

Home-work leaves no time for
play—
Verbs to learn, and sums to do...
From my window yesterday,
I saw a little boy I knew.

"Lida, come and play with me.
Here's a sweet for you," said he.
"I've got tasks," I said, "to do:
German—one, and Russian—two."

I'm no chatterbox—not I!
Little Vova spread that lie.
Chatter? I've no time, so how
Can I chatter, tell me, now?

AUNTIE'S COUNTRY-HOUSE

"What luck!" said Auntie
in great exultation,
"We've rented a country-house
quite near the station;
near a wood of shady trees,
as for berries—all you please!
Just ten minutes from the station,
You can reach our house with ease.

There the scenery's a pleasure!
And our garden is a treasure!"
Auntie Olya then invited
Papa, Mama, and me, too.
Auntie said to us, excited:
"Stay the week-end with us, do!
I'll explain where we live, so
You will know just where to go.
When you pass the station fences,
Where a narrow ditch commences
At the station, to the right—
Walk until you come in sight
Of a watch-tower and a paling.
After that, it's all plain sailing!
Do not leave the path, and it
Soon will lead you to a pit;
Then it breaks off short, just where you
See a water-well, and there you
Climb the hillock, and you'll see
Where we live—House Forty-Three!"
Auntie looked at me and said,
"Bring him, too," and stroked my
head.
"He will not be in your way.
Let him breathe fresh air all day."

First, we walked on straight ahead.
"No, not this way," Mama said.
"From the station, to the right.
There a ditch should be in sight."

At the turning, all we found
Was a marshy strip of ground.
Round the forest fringe we blundered,
Climbed a little hill, and we
Met a woman—and she wondered
When we asked for Forty-Three.
"Why, that's somewhere near the
station!"
Was the woman's explanation.

As in spite, rain started
drizzling;
Daddy, angry, started
fizzling:
"Where is your umbrella? I
Warned you—look now
at the sky!"

So we waited in the rain
Till the weather cleared
again.
I was drenched from head
to toe,
Not a step more could I go.
So we dragged back to the
station,
Got into a homebound
train.

And I've lost all inclination
To go visiting again.
I'll thank Auntie in a letter,
But I'll tell her, home is better!

MY FIRST VISIT TO THE BALLET

I first went to a ballet when
I was getting on for ten.

My friend Lyuba went with me
To the theatre, and we
Had our coats hung up on stands
In the cloak-room, where they gave us
Special tickets in our hands.

I'm at the ballet, now, at last!
And everything completely passed
From my memory. If you
Were to ask me, "What's twice two?"
I would not know what to say.
How I waited for this day!

Soon I'd see a lovely fairy,
Sticking-out skirt, and all in white!
I sat still, wide-eyed and breathless,
And I held my ticket tight.

Then the trumpets blared, drums rumbled.
I and Lyuba almost tumbled
From our seats in fright. Then, oh!
Wherever did my ticket go?

Fairies on the stage were tripping,
But—to fairies I was blind.
I kept looking for my ticket
Which, alas! I could not find.

It must've rolled beneath a chair,
But under which—where is it?
For ballets now I do not care—
My only care's my ticket.

Louder still the music thundered,
Now the cotillion was on.
We slipped down to the floor, and
wondered
Where that ticket could have gone.

It had disappeared completely...
I crawled to the seventh row;
People hissed at us in wonder,
"Who's that crawling there below?"

Butterflies danced in the spotlights,
But on the stage I looked no more—
I kept searching for my ticket,
Till I found it on the floor.

All the lights went up just then,
And everyone walked past me.

"The ballet's lovely," I said, when
The girls in our school asked me.

KNITTING

My uncommon sister Ann
Knits at any time she can.
Even when she goes to bed
She puts her knitting by her head.
In the darkness she will sit
On her bed and start to knit.

My uncommon sister Ann
Knits at any time she can.
She will rather knit than eat,
Folk like her you seldom meet.

If she sees her yarn is ending,
Our big wardrobe she unlocks,
Into separate pieces rending
All the woollen scarves and socks.

Grandmamma comes home from town.
"Where's that woollen dressing-gown?"
Frocks, pull-overs, jumpers, caps—
All the house is pulled to scraps.

Where my woolly pups lie sleeping
By the wicket in the sun,
There my sister Ann is peeping,
All her wool already spun!

I must put my pups away,
Or they'll come to woe this day!
She will spin them, one and all,
Into one big fluffy ball,
And, without a word to me,
Knit them into gloves, you'll see!

THE CROQUET PLAYERS

Every morning on the lawn,
With the first peep of the dawn,
Little boys begin to play,
Tiffing all the livelong day.

Maybe, it's a hoop a-falling,
Or Andrei once more a-brawling.

In the woods, I doubt if ever
You will hear them make such noise;
But those croquet players never
Hunt for nuts like other boys!

All the summer, they'll be found
Playing on the croquet ground.

Yet, today our croquet players
Are not shouting at their play;
Even quarrelsome Andrei
Whispers at his play today.

You will hardly hear a sound
When a hoop falls to the ground.

Now, the pioneer-leader
Came to watch them at their play;
Everything was as it should be,
Peace and harmony held sway.

"Now, at last, you are not tiffing;
You are friends at last, I see.
When the troop meets next, you'll tell us
How you reached such amity."

In surprise, the players all
Let their croquet mallets fall.

And, in whispers almost noiseless,
Answered, "That's because we're voiceless!
We've been shouting every day,
And our vocal cords gave way!"

THE SWINGS

The green rustling leaves
in the soft breeze were playing;
the swings on the oak-tree
were swinging and swaying.

From breakfast till lunch,
till the rest-bell went ringing,
the kids of the First Class
kept swinging and swinging.

The turn of the Third Class
and Sixth Class came then,
and next came the turn
of the First Class again.

Now upwards, now downwards
the swings go a-flying,
and troop-leader Klava
looks on, deeply sighing.

She says that she really
cannot comprehend
how people can swing so
for hours without end.

Upwards, and downwards,
and up to the sky...
One's head can grow dizzy
from swinging so high!

After each kiddy
was well tucked in bed,
off to the swings,
in the park, Klava sped.

Klava's at peace:
fast asleep is each kiddy;
she, if she pleases,
can swing till she's giddy.

Anna Petrovna,
the troop-leaders' chief,
called Klava that evening

and said, "Now, look here!
Your troop is undisciplined
past all belief!
Don't waste so much time
on the swings, Klava dear."

As soon as the leaders
were all gone to bed,
Anna Petrovna
towards the oak sped.
She's in the Tenth Class,
and very well may
play on the swings
till the end of the day.

The evening is lovely—
indoors it's so stifling!—
Aunt Mary strolled out
in the park, where it's cool.
Aunt Mary's our nurse,
and with **her,** there's no trifling,
for this year she finished
the medical school.

She came up to Anna
Petrovna, and read
a lecture to her.
"On vacation," she said,
"Take care of your health.
Now relax—go to bed!"

Anna blushed red
at her nurse's

stern lecture, and went
off to bed, with a sigh.

Aunt Mary... She's swinging.
The evening breeze whispers,
the swings, they are winging
up, up, to the sky.

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